SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE INCONVENIENCE OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

BY

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Ειρωνεια δε εστι λεγειν τι προσποιουμενον μη λεγειν, η εν τοις αναγκαιοις ονομασι τα πραγματα προσαγορευειν.

ARIST. RHET.

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A GREAT many people will laugh at me, I ſuppoſe, for ſaying, that I think a man ſhould be honeſt, coſt him what it may. I ſhall take courage to inform my reader, however, that my bookſeller, upon reading my Obſervations upon the Commandments, told me, to my no little regret, that I was not the firſt writer, who had treated them in this manner: adding, that Hildrop, an author whoſe name and writings I had never ſo much as heard of, had done the like before me. If there be any merit in my book, I ſhould chooſe to have it without any deductions; and in order to it, I have given this notice; ſince it may be poſſible that ſome of my readers, if I ſhould have the luck to meet with any, who, like myſelf, never have read or ſeen Hildrop's works, may give me the credit of being the firſt in a road, in which, I am very ſorry to ſay, a better man than I am has been before me.

WHITE PLACE,
Feb. 18, 1795.

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EXORDIUM.

IN conſequence of the utmoſt intention of thought, and the deepeſt conſideration, I diſcovered, that the Ten Commandments, which Moſes brought down with him out of the burning mountain ſome time ſince, are not only of no ſort of uſe, but a very great inconvenience to a Gentleman in purſuit of his pleaſures. They appear to me to be juſt ſo many links of iron, caſt upon the freedom of human actions; and, if I may be permitted to ſpeak my ſentiments, I think it is now high time they were filed off and thrown aſide, in order that a man may have his limbs at full liberty. It is certainly a very wonderful thing that people ſhould not have ſhaken off ſuch a load of moral and religious lumber before this time, the rather, ſeeing that it is utterly impoſſible for a nation of any ſpirit to be at all at its eaſe, encumbered thus with a vaſt weight of Hebrew Ordi-

nances. I think I ſhall deſerve great praiſe in doing all I can towards ſetting people free from a whimſical ſyſtem of obligations, which have for ſome years made ſlaves of mankind. To ſpeak the truth, had I not borne witneſs, with great grief of heart, to the ſtrugglings, agonies, and convulſions of conſcience, which have been obſerved to rend from time to time the inteſtines of ſuch of my ſuffering fellow-creatures, who, having committed Theft, Adultery, Murder, or the like, have thereupon fallen into terror and vexation, becauſe, forſooth, they had been forbidden by the Commandments of God ſo to do, upon pain of Everlaſting Damnation; and had I not been thoroughly perſuaded of the folly and vanity of ſuch childiſh fears and apprehenſions which wrought ſo much Scathe in their Souls, I ſhould not have ſpoken one loud word. But deeming the thing, with great juſtice, to be a moſt inhuman Barbarity to withold any conſolation which it is in my power to beſtow, the only means, indeed, of aſſuaging the ſcaldings of the conſcience, and of laying all ſuch horrible Devils which terror raiſes in the mind of man, lo! I forthwith caſt about to attack the twentieth chapter of Exodus, receiving day after day proofs heaped upon proofs, of the very great nuiſance of the Laws which it contains, and

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the many diſturbances which they breed in ſociety. Behold, therefore, courteous reader, a good ſalve for every ſore of conſcience in theſe my moſt ſalutary obſervations: behold the very foundation of every fear removed, the exiſtence of God confuted, and all his Commandments, as it happens at a game at nine-pins, knocked down one upon another. But I would have thee remember, courteous Sir, that the very great hurry, in which I found myſelf to aſſiſt the diſtreſſed, is the cauſe of my not being ſo full in argument upon every point as I otherwiſe ſhould have been; for, when a life is in extreme danger, the Doctor, upon the ſudden, cannot carry his whole ſhop along with him, but fills his pockets with ſome of the beſt medicines, and runs to his patient as faſt as he poſſibly can. Upon this conſideration it is that I hope for excuſe in the not having exhauſted my whole ſtock of ratiocination upon the ſeveral heads of this my treatiſe: for be it known, that, had not a vaſt multitude of miſerable ſinners lingered with the utmoſt impatience for ſome comfort at my hands, I could have produced, at my leiſure, a ſufficient quantity of argumentation upon the abſurdity of any one of the Commandments, to break the back of a dray-horſe.

Obſervations on the firſt Commandment.

THOU SHALT HAVE NONE OTHER GODS BUT ME.

THIS is a very great hardſhip, to ſay no worſe of it. — Now, in the firſt place, I ſhould be glad to know by this Law, what will become of the Glutton, and the Drunkard, who make a God of the belly? of the Miſers, who make Gods of their money-bags? of Gameſters, who worſhip the dice-box? of the Beaux, who go down upon their knees to no one thing elſe in the univerſe but the fine Ladies? I could name a great many other Deities: but leſt I ſhould offend any man by taking the name of his God in vain, let theſe which I have counted out ſuffice. I muſt confeſs, that this Commandment has ſomething in it, which is enough to turn a man's head round upon his ſhoulders, — it implies, contrary to all ſenſe and proof, the exiſtence of a ſupreme Being. This fanciful notion, which has gained a great deal of credit in the world, to the no ſmall conſternation of weak and gloomy mortals,

mortals, who would fain partake of the comforts of this life, but dare as well eat their fingers as touch upon any luxury, for fear of being damned to all eternity—this fanciful notion, I ſay, muſt be totally deſtroyed, before people can enjoy themſelves as they ſhould do, or, indeed, live at all like rational creatures. So great a fool, I ſhould think, cannot poſſibly exiſt upon the face of the earth, who believes in the being of any thing which he never ſaw, more eſpecially if he has ever heard of that famous old ſaying, that "*Seeing is believing*;"—or, to carry matters ſtill further, in what he never felt, if he has ever heard of another Proverb, equally celebrated with the former, that "*Feeling is "the Truth.*" To go yet deeper, for I will ſearch this matter to the bottom, before I have done with it—can any man be ſo very mad as to believe that there exiſts, in the nature of things, any ſuch place as London, unleſs he has ſeen the place with his own eyes? At this rate, my good reader, what would become of our common ſenſe? If men ſo little in their wits are permitted to run about looſe in the world, it may be deemed, and with great juſtice, a very hard thing, to keep folks any longer chained up in Bedlam. There are men, it is true, who go by the name of great ſcholars, who would

ſain coax the moſt enlightened of the age into a creed, that ſuch things really and truly do exiſt, which are not objects, nor can be ſo, of any of our ſenſes: and indeed ſome of their arguments to this effect have gained ſo much ground as not to want men, who might otherwiſe paſs for very wiſe and learned people, that admit them for truths. And in this are theſe great ſcholars very cunning men, and cannot by any means be ſaid to argue in vain, foraſmuch as they get a very comfortable ſubſiſtence for themſelves and families by the propagation of theſe their ſophiſtries. But it is now high time that the world be undeceived in theſe matters, as it cannot be denied that, in proportion as it caſts off thoſe reſtraints and obligations which Religion and Morality have thrown upon it, its progreſs will be ſwift towards liberty and perfection. And I muſt be permitted to ſay, that the world will never be free or perfect, as long as it tamely ſubmits its noſe into the hands of Philoſophers, to be pulled this way, that way, and the other way, juſt as they think good. When the world was in its infant ſtate, there certainly was at that time, I will allow, ſome neceſſity for a belief in God, and a ſtrict attendance to laws both moral and religious: but ſince it is grown to its years of maturity, the

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hour is come for its childiſh fears, its Fools-cap, and its Leading-ſtrings, to be finally laid aſide: and ſurely I cannot ſhew forth a better example for its imitation, than that of our modern fine Gentlemen, who, as ſoon as they arrive at the age of diſcretion, are aſhamed to be thought to keep in mind any thing which they have been taught either at School or the Univerſity. Let me, therefore, entreat the world to think upon its age and dignity, and by no means diſgrace its wiſdom in liſtening, like a baby, to an old woman's ſtory about the exiſtence of a God, and the truth of the Bible. But, leſt I ſhould be thought rather to declaim, than refute, I will now proceed to examine ſome of the arguments by which the Philoſophers undertake to prove that there is any ſuch thing as a God.—And firſt, they lead us from the effect to the cauſe: Plato ſays, Παν δε αυ το γιγνομενον, ὑπ' αιτιȣ τινος εξ αναγκης γιγνεσθαι· παντι γαρ αδυνατον χωρις αιτιȣ γενεσιν σχειν. Thus he holds forth in the beginning of his Timæus, with how much truth ſhall preſently appear. Ariſtotle, in the eleventh book of his Metaphyſicks, aſks the queſtion, Πως γαρ κινηθησεται, (χρηματα ſcilicet) ει μηδεν εσαι ενεργειᾳ αιτιον; ȣ γαρ ἡ γε ὑλη κινησει αυτη ἑαυτην αλλα τεκτονικη· ȣδε τα επιμηνια ȣδε ἡ γη, αλλα τα σπερματα και ἡ γονη. Διο ενιοι ποιȣσιν

αει ενεργειαν. οἷον Λευκιππος και Πλατων, αει γαρ φασι ειναι κινησιν· αλλα δια τι και τινα ϗ λεγϗσιν. ϗδε ὡδι ϗδε την αιτιαν· ϗδεν γαρ ὡς ετυχε κινειται, αλλα δει τι αει ὑπαρχειν. Et paucis interjectis, ſic ait, εϛι τοινυν τι και ὁ κινει. επει δε το κινϗμενον και κινϗν, μεσον τοινυν εϛι τι, ὁ ϗ κινϗμενον κινει, ἀΐδιον, και ϗσια, και ενεργεια ϗσα. Thomas Aquinas ſpeaks boldly, Remota autem cauſa, removetur effectus: ergo ſi non fuerit primum in cauſis efficientibus, nec erit ultimum, nec medium. Sed ſi procedatur in infinitum in cauſis efficientibus, non erit prima cauſa efficiens: et ſic non erit nec effectus ultimus, nec cauſæ efficientes mediæ, quod *patet eſſe falſum.* Ergo eſt neceſſe ponere aliquam cauſam efficientem primam, *quam omnes* Deum nominant. Primæ Par. Art. iii. Grotius de Veritate Chriſt. Rel. appears to be of the ſame opinion. A very old book, called the Bible, now little known, ſays, very plainly, בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ׃ ותארץ היתה תהו ובהו׃ But this is an aſſertion without any proof, and cannot therefore be admitted in argument. And it is a very fit queſtion in this place, whether God's word ought to go for any thing to prove his own exiſtence? But, before I go any further, it ſhould be obſerved, in the midſt of all this learning, that no man can argue well without talking in Hebrew, Greek,

Greek, and Latin, although it be nothing at all to the purpoſe; becauſe he never will convince the dunces, unleſs he reaſons in languages which they do not underſtand; for then, let him ſay what he will, quicquid in Buccam venerit, they will pronounce, with great ſolidity, that his arguments are very good, in order that they may be thought to underſtand him. But αφεις την ὑπεραν, τον ποδα διωκω: this απροσδιονυσως has nothing to do with Bacchus. To return to * Plato and Ariſtotle: if the cauſe of the cauſe be the cauſe of the thing cauſed, and the thing cauſed of the cauſe of the cauſe be the effect of the cauſe of the cauſe, the cauſe of the cauſe may be given without any effect being cauſed. For example, Medicine may be given as the cauſe of Health, the Phyſician who mixes up the medicine as the cauſe of its cauſe; therefore the Phyſician is the cauſe of the cauſe of the thing cauſed: but it is given that health is not univerſaliter cauſed either of the cauſe, or of the cauſe of the cauſe; therefore the cauſe of the cauſe

* Men who diſpute the Being of a God, always talk a great deal without ſaying any thing to the purpoſe, and take a world of pains to prove and refute thoſe things the moſt, which have the leaſt to do with the ſubject: the perfection of their art lies in making vaſtly plain and good, ſuch principles which no man in his wits will deny them, in order to get any thing elſe they propoſe to be taken for granted, without any proofs at all.

may be given without being the cauſe of the cauſe of the thing cauſed. Thus it is manifeſt that cauſes, and the cauſes of cauſes, may exiſt, without being the cauſes, or the cauſes of cauſes of any effects at all. Moreover the effect may be given to exiſt without the cauſe, or the cauſe of the cauſe; foraſmuch as health often exiſts without having any thing at all to do with the cauſe of the cauſe, or the cauſe of the thing cauſed: therefore the effect may be given without the cauſe, or the cauſe of the cauſe of the thing cauſed: therefore the argument a priori, from the cauſe to the effect, and the argument a poſteriori, from the effect to the cauſe, are proved to be Elenchi. Thus having ſhaken one of their magnificent arguments into duſt, not without great hazard of burying myſelf, like Samſon, in the ruins; I ſhall next conſider, whether the eſſence of a phyſical eſſence implies the eſſence of an actual eſſence: I proceed univerſaliter upon the negation of the implication; and affirm that the connex, If there be a ſtar in exiſtence, the pre-exiſtence and co-exiſtence of an actual exiſtence is proved, is not good, becauſe, if it be true that that which is, is, there can be no need of any Neceſſarium quid, to make it that which it already is: for, if A is B, and C is B, C is already

ready A, without any need of D. But it may be objected, that if a ſtar be already a ſtar, and it be admitted, that, as it is a ſtar, it needs no help ab extra to exiſt a ſtar, yet it cannot be collected that it did not need ſome help to make it a ſtar: I anſwer, neither can it be affirmed that there ever was a time when it was not a ſtar. But Ariſtotle ſays in his Metaphyſicks, that whatſoever is compounded may be diſſolved: but all things ſubject to ſolution are not eternal: therefore there was a time when a ſtar was not. And if we admit his principles, this fellow will play the devil with us. If there was a time when a ſtar was not, there muſt a time be given when a ſtar was made: but nothing can make itſelf without exiſting before itſelf, which is an abſurdity: therefore ſomething muſt be given to have exiſted before a ſtar began to exiſt, to make it what it is, or elſe it had never been; which ſomething is God. This looks like a very fine argument, and I ſuppoſe the inventor of it thought it proved a great deal: and although arguments, ſuch as this is, are very eaſily anſwered by making them no anſwer at all, as wiſe old Gentlemen receive the reaſonings of young folks with ſilence, in order to ſhew them, that they have ſaid nothing worth notice; however, I ſhall proceed againſt it with an horned

ſyllogiſm

ſyllogiſm in this manner: all arguments are raiſed to fortify ſome weakneſs in the ſubject: but truth cannot be ſaid to be a thing in which there is any weakneſs: therefore the ſtronger the argument is built to defend any thing, ſuch thing is falſe in proportion to the force and ſtrength of the argument which is made to defend it. Theſe then are the horns of the dilemma; either the argument I am oppoſing is a good one, or a bad one: if it be ſtrong and good, it implies weakneſs in that which it defends; which cannot be truth, ſince truth is not to be ſhaken: if it be a bad one, a bad argument proves nothing at all but its own abſurdity.

But to proceed. Surely it is now high time for men of courage and ſpirit to burſt all religious bonds aſunder, and that the whims and dreams of Theology and Metaphyſicks were laughed at by all who lay any the leaſt claim to modern refinement. I would adviſe mankind to ſtrike a bold ſtroke, to believe in nothing but what ſuits its own convenience. A man can never be happy as long as he thinks another wiſer than himſelf; therefore let me admoniſh every one who ſhould happen to be puzzled at any odd thing in nature, by no means to go to any great Scholar to get it explained, but paſs it over without troubling his head at all about the matter; always taking

ing it for granted, that, if he does not know how to account for it, it is impoſſible any one elſe ſhould. If a man be the greateſt fool on the face of the earth, he will be ſure to give the wiſeſt Philoſopher his due, if, without conſulting him upon any emergency, he does him the honour to think him only as clever a fellow as himſelf. Moreover, it is by no means ſuitable to the character of a man of ſpirit to own himſelf ignorant in any thing; but rather to remain ſo, than to ſtain his reputation in begging for a little knowledge. Indeed, I think fit to ſay, that it is very dangerous for a man to be too curious in his inquiries into the truth of the exiſtence of God; it may ſo far diſqualify him for a man of faſhion and pleaſure, as to ſpoil the enjoyment of the better part of his life. The miſchief of the thing lies in this; if a man once gives himſelf up to thinking, he is a loſt creature to himſelf, his friends, and the world; he takes it into his brains that he is continually finding out ſome ſtrange thing or other: the growing of the graſs fixes him in amazement; he cannot eat an apple without admiring the wonderful contexture of its parts; and the formation of an animal makes his hair ſtand on end upon his head. I have known a man of this turn of mind fix his eyes upon a cabbage with as much aſtoniſh-

aſtoniſhment as if he had ſeen the apparition of his grandmother; and reckon up the number of veins in one of the leaves of it, with as much exactneſs as another man would count his guineas in change for a bank-note. I look upon a man of this ſort to be upon his parole of lunacy, and, as long as he does no miſchief, is permitted to run about the garden, like a tame gull, and divert himſelf with picking up ſnail-ſhells, and catching of butterflies. I have often conceived Phyſiology to be little elſe than a lure held out by ingenious men to entice the unwary into a belief of a Divinity, merely for the purpoſe of making them pay to be taught how to worſhip him. And, indeed, when we take a view of the univerſe, and behold all things about us governed by the wiſeſt ſyſtem of Laws, and diſcover the maſs, which at firſt ſight appears to be a mixture of diſturbance, and a quarrel of elements, upon a nicer examination to be full of beauty, order and magnificence: when we look into the properties of things, and obſerve bodies of different qualities, not only not flying from all aſſociation with each other, but even joining in ſuch communion as to conſtitute the choiceſt complexions of Nature; and that the very principle whoſe chief attribute it is to divide and to diſunite

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and ſet things at a diſtance from one another, I mean a repugnancy of parts, producing agreement and harmony in the whole: and, as diſputes in the moral world bring folks together, though it be by the ears, and cauſe them to agree in one point, the knocking each other on the head, and cloſe the ranks of warring individuals making a uniform whole, a perfect battle: thus when we behold in the natural world conflicting principles engaged in perpetual combat, and the powers allotted to each upon ſuch equal balance as none of them can, for any great ſpace of time, maintain the maſtery over their opponents, ſometimes the one getting the better, and ſometimes the other, and their mutual ſtruggles and bickerings yielding an effect as different from its cauſe as order differs from confuſion, producing a perfect ſyſtem: when we ſearch into the rubbiſh of the earth, and diſcover the ſeeds of plants and the eggs of living creatures depoſited in the midſt of it; and behold the dirt and refuſe in which they lie concealed, furniſhing them not only with protection from injuries in ſuch their ſtate of infirmity, but alſo with food and nouriſhment at the time appointed for their change: when we look up at the ſtars, and examine into the wonderful regularity of their movements,

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take notice of the Tropicks, the Solſtices, the riſings and ſettings of the Sun, behold the Comets guided by ſome great Power through the vaſt depths of the unbounded ſpace which ſurrounds us, without interfering with the numberleſs bodies which roll on every ſide of them by any extravagant deviations—I muſt confeſs that we are in very great danger of believing in the exiſtence of an Almighty. Add to this, when the Philoſophers tell us that the world cannot exiſt, any more than can a temple without the pre-exiſtence of ſome Architect; that no motion can exiſt without the co-exiſtence of ſome Mover, ordinem non dari niſi cum relatione ad aliquid primum, I own, that, unleſs we are very ſteady men, we ſhall be in no ſmall danger of admitting what they ſay to be truths. But we muſt firſt of all learn to ſhut our eyes againſt the light of Philoſophy, if it be our intention to mount aloft above the ridiculous fancies of the Vulgar.

Obſerva-

Obſervations upon the Second Commandment.

THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THYSELF ANY GRAVEN IMAGE, &c.

THIS is a very fine piece of Antiquity, as indeed are all the other Commandments, and more eſpecially ſo as they appear in the old Hebrew character: as curioſities ſurely they are intitled to ſome portion of reſpect, and ſhould take their place accordingly, among other rarities, in the cabinet of the Virtuoſo. But to preſcribe them to the world as the rules of its conduct, when it is ſo very evident that they contain ſuch principles as are ſworn foes to its moſt exquiſite gratifications, is certainly a very great abſurdity. It is not to be denied, perhaps, that they ſuited extremely well with the manners of Moſes and his multitude in the wilderneſs: but it is to be conſidered, that the world, ſince thoſe times, has made vaſt progreſs, and taken prodigious ſtrides towards elegance and perfection: ſo much ſo that no man, of good ſenſe, will deem the thing by any means fit and proper, that the ſame rules which were calculated for thoſe rude and barbarous ages, ſhould be propoſed as ſuitable

directions for a modern fine Gentleman. Surely any perſon, who has wit enough to foreſee that he never can get aſtride upon his horſe, if he keeps both his legs on one ſide of the ſaddle, muſt be well aware of the abſurdity of thinking, that people of faſhion now-a-days are not much better judges of what they ought to do than God can be for them. And it would be a very ſtrange thing, if they did any other than what is right, ſince they have ſo able an inſtructor as the Devil himſelf to adviſe them. The Commandment now under conſideration may be looked upon as the leaſt injurious of any in the Decalogue, ſince the force of it is directed againſt a comical old cuſtom, which cannot be ſaid to be much the rage with us at preſent—I mean Idolatry. Indeed, upon re-conſidering the Commandment, I have my ſuſpicions that the Ladies are a little concerned in it, ſince it goes on to ſay, "Thou "ſhalt not bow down to them or worſhip "them." I know this is ſpoken with reſpect to the Idols in general: but when I reflect upon the nauſeous finery of the Idols dreſſes, the profuſion of diamonds which they wear, the very diſguſting manner in which their faces are painted, the prayers, adorations, bows, and fine ſpeeches offered at their feet, I muſt own that I cannot diſcover any other difference

difference between an Idol and a modern fine Lady, except indeed that the one is compoſed of fleſh and blood, the other of wood and ſtone. If this be really the ſtate of the caſe, and there appear to be very good grounds for the conjecture, this Commandment, like the reſt, may be attended with very ſerious and alarming conſequences; and I do hereby enter my caveat againſt it, leſt the Beaux, who bow down and worſhip the fine Ladies, ſhould pay any the ſmalleſt regard to this Law againſt Idolatry.

Obſervations upon the Third Commandment.

THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THY GOD IN VAIN, &c.

THOU ſhalt not take God's name in vain! What, not if we can get any thing by it? Poſſeſſion of a good eſtate by perjury, for inſtance? A man would be a fool indeed, if he cared at all what uſe he put God's name to, if it might be the means of putting any thing into his pocket. But I have my doubts whether that would be a breach of

the Law: for how can any one, who gets any thing by it, be ſaid to take the Lord's name in vain? I would by no means be thought to abuſe the Commandment for what is not intended in it: and although I have my doubts of this being the genuine ſenſe of the ſtatute, yet it is ſometimes a handſome thing, whatever logicians may ſay, to take for granted what remains to be proved. If it is a ſin however to make ſo good a uſe of the Lord's name, it is a ſin that has ſo much utility and ſpirit in it, that I would earneſtly recommend it to the practice of mankind: and as for that fooliſh notion of being damned after death, I would meet it by ſaying, that damnation cannot have much weight with any man who does not believe that he ſhall ever live to ſee it. Having mentioned the word damnation, I will beg for the reader's excuſe, to make an obſervation or two upon it. Damnation, or, in other words, the being burned for one's ſins in a great fire to eternity, would be exceſſively inconvenient, were there any truth in it: but the notion of Hell-fire is grown too old now to paſs, in theſe enlightened times, with any ſort of credit: ſo much ſo, that moſt people take a great deal more pains to guard themſelves againſt fires in their houſes at night, than to ſave

their

their ſouls from this fire after death, by doing what God bids them: wiſely deeming it great loſs of time to prepare themſelves againſt what *may* happen, without being ſure that it *will* happen. But to return to the Commandment: the uſe of the tongue ſeems to be a good deal concerned in it; and were it to be ſtrictly obſerved as a rule in converſation, I am at a loſs to conceive in what manner one Gentleman could ſpeak five words to another, without a very great impediment in his ſpeech. But with reſpect to the obſervance of this law, I will ſay, to give people their due, that I do not think a great deal needs be added upon it, in order to perſuade men to break it; for, to the honour of our age be it ſaid, I very ſeldom meet with a man of any claſs, who makes the uſe of God's name any matter of conſcience, whether it be introduced as an ornament of ſpeech only, or, with the ceremony of kiſſing the Bible, as the means of making ſome addition to his fortune. But, as I ſaid juſt now, this may not be judged to come within the ſtatute; and when there is any thing gotten by it, God's name cannot properly be ſaid to be taken in vain.

Obſervations upon the Fourth Commandment.

REMEMBER THOU KEEP HOLY THE SABBATH DAY, &c.

ANY one who reads this Commandment might think, that people really had nothing elſe to do on a Sunday, but to go to church, and ſay their prayers. — Horribly gothic as this cuſtom may appear, yet there are, I am aſhamed to ſay, a few folks of very good diſtinction, who ſtill make a practice of going to church, with their wives and families, almoſt every Sunday. Far be it from me to deal in the uſual cant of writers, who declaim againſt the degeneracy of the times—I ſhould be guilty of much ſcandal, and of very great injuſtice to the age in which I have the honour to live, to ſay, that a very conſiderable majority, compoſed, I muſt add, of a number of perſons of the firſt figure, did not ſet the world the beſt of examples, in not only not going to church themſelves, but with a very laudable zeal making a jeſt of thoſe that do. And I will allow that a man muſt needs be the occaſion of not a little merriment, ſhould he be diſcovered upon his knees on a mat,

a mat, in the middle of a great cathedral, begging God's pardon for his ſins:—or, which may appear ſtill more abſurd, returning him thanks for a plentiful ſeaſon, when every body knows that his thanks are rather due to the Farmers for taking good care of the land. But as religion falls more particularly under my obſervation in this Commandment, it will not be amiſs to give ſome account of it, and what uſes (for it certainly has its uſes) it ought to be put to. If we look into the political hiſtories of the world, and view mankind modified into a variety of civil conſtitutions, we ſhall find, upon an examination into each of them, that religion is always ſeen to have a place in the ſtructure of every ſyſtem. The image of ſome Deity was not only looked upon by our wiſe forefathers to be a very pretty ornament in their public edifices, but alſo to be of very great uſe to keep the multitude in awe, to the end that ſuch ſtubborn ſtuff might become more pliable, by the means of ſpiritual fear, to the purpoſes of civil diſcipline. And we find, accordingly, that as ſoon as the rabble were taught, with great art, to believe in the Divinities of the land, and began to tremble at the thought of the wrath of Heaven, the ground-work of government was made

good, the laws were armed with double terrours, and the people did what their maſters bade them. So far religion is of great uſe: and upon this account it is, that we find Gods, one or more, in every nation under the ſun, adorned with different titles and ceremonies, as beſt ſuit with the plan of the conſtitution. Moſes, a very able politician, ſoon found it to be impracticable to attempt the management of ſuch a multitude as he had upon his hands, without having recourſe to a Deity:

Nec Deus interſit niſi dignus vindice nodus. HOR.

And even when the Iſraelites were convinced of the being of a God by a ſenſible exhibition of his glories upon mount Sinai, as the Bible tells us, they made bold to fabricate a God to their better liking, and fell down and worſhipped a Calf, in the midſt of the roarings of the thunder of the Moſt High; exceeding in this, perhaps, any thing an Atheiſt of the preſent times would dare to do, who is ſo great a fool as to fall into a fit of the vapours upon the ſudden burſting of a modern thunder-cloud. But to return from this journey into the antiquities of the Eaſt, whence aroſe the religion which we are bold to call the only true one—it will be very much to my purpoſe to ſhew, upon what ſort of authority this religion is built,

and

and by theſe means we ſhall ſee whether, upon the expoſure of the frame of it to the air, like bodies preſerved in leaden coffins, it will not fall into duſt and aſhes. But it may be aſked, whether I do not think that I deſerve to be hanged, for taking ſo much pains to extinguiſh religion, at the ſame time that I confeſs, that, if none other, it has its political uſes? I anſwer, that we are too good to ſtand in need of any religion: we, "*were all laws aboliſhed, "ſhould live the ſame lives*" Religion can be of no uſe to us, a refined race of men, who not only ſee at a glance what is right, but immediately practiſe it. We ſtand in need of no compulſion, we ought to be free to chooſe which we will ſerve, God or the Devil: and if folks like the Devil beſt, upon account of the ſweet-meats he ſtrews in their way, I make no doubt but that they will meet with a juſt reward for ſo doing. If I may be permitted to ſpeak my mind, I think it is high time that every one were ſet at his liberty to do juſt as he pleaſes; and I dare ſay no man would do any thing, without being able to give a ſpecial good reaſon for it. I am much grieved in my heart, to ſee ſo many fine young fellows yearly nipped in the bud at the gallows, and humbly think that the laws ſhould not

interfere

interfere in ſuch trifling matters as the breaking into houſes, cutting people's throats, committing of rapes, ſacrilege, and other the like innocent amuſements. But I ſhall not ſpeak againſt our religion, without looking into its principles; and the reader of theſe my obſervations ſhall be ſatisfied, that I do not blame it without very good reaſons. That which we profeſs is called, if my memory does not fail me, the Chriſtian religion; and it certainly abounds with inſtructions, but none, as I can find, of any ſort of uſe to us at the preſent day. Chriſt, who built it upon the foundation which he found caſt to his hand in the Old Teſtament, was a perſon, it muſt be confeſſed, of ſome celebrity ſeventeen hundred years ago; but now ſeems to be of little uſe elſe but to give a date to the almanack. I have examined the ſcheme of Chriſtian diſciplines with very great attention, as we have it in the original tongue, and this, for fear I might do it any wrong by reading it, as it were, at ſecond hand, in the tranſlations; and I muſt declare, that I have found it extremely deficient in many points, and thoſe of the very laſt conſequence. I muſt beg the reader to take particular notice of what I am going to ſay: I will take my oath of it, if need be, that a man may read the whole

of

of the New Teſtament, ſo is the book called which contains the Chriſtian inſtitutes, from one end to the other, without being inſtructed in one ſingle rule for the advancement of any of the fine arts, the commencing a maſter in which it is that conſtitutes the Man of Faſhion. So different from this is the truth, that I dare ſay the reader will be aſtoniſhed, when I tell him, that drinking, gaming, fornication, adultery, murder, blaſphemy, ſlander, and every other noble art, are abſolutely abuſed, threatned and condemned in almoſt every leaf of the book. Let me not be miſunderſtood to qualify this my ſentence on the New Teſtament by the word *almoſt*, as if I would ſay that here and there a leaf is extant therein, which ſeems to favour the fine arts which I have juſt named: by no means—I will take my oath of it, I repeat it, that they are univerſally condemned by the ſpirit of the book, throughout. Hence it is evident enough, that no man who has the honour to deſerve to be hanged, or to be ſuffocated in a horſe-pond, as a nuiſance to ſociety, ſtands clear of the bitter ſcourge of the holy Canons. Thus much for the Chriſtian doctrines, which give ſcoundrels and profligates no quarter, but ſtretch forth a rod that feſters in their fleſh, and whet and exaſperate their

conſcience

conſciences againſt them. I muſt beg leave to obſerve however, before I quit this ſubject, that it is to act the part of one out of his right wits, rather than of a good critic, to beſtow unqualified praiſe or cenſure upon any compoſition; and I will ſay, if it be upon no other account than to gain better credit for being juſt in my cenſures, and to raiſe the price of my praiſe, that this volume, as a code of moral laws, is extremely complete, correct, and conſiſtent in all its parts; and, further let me add, that it certainly gives a man fair play to the very laſt; tells him, that there is always a pardon ready for him at any time, when he pleaſes to put himſelf in a fit poſture to aſk for it. To ſpeak the truth, the plain, honeſt, hearty welcome that the legiſlator gives to thoſe who tell him that they are ſorry they have offended him, I cannot but ſay, put me in a very good humour when I read it. But the rules of moral conduct themſelves, ſome of the principal of which will fall under my obſervations in the remaining pages of this diſcourſe, are ſurely ſo very contradictory to the preſent modes and faſhions, inaſmuch as it is not to be expected that people of free ſpirit and good breeding will give up the pleaſures and comforts of life for their ſake.

If

If Chriſt had come forward, indeed, as a uſeful inſtructor in ſuch things as are really worth the notice of the polite world, and put fine folks in a better method of plundering young men of their patrimony than hazard, faro, or EO; enriched the ſcience of intriguing with ſome new plots and machinations, by which men of faſhion might with greater ſecurity debauch beautiful women, without recurring ſtill to the old trick of making friendſhips with their fathers, brothers, or huſbands; taken the turf into conſideration, and given his Apoſtles ſome uſeful hints concerning jockeyſhip, betting, and the management of race-horſes; left us ſome good rules for duelling, improved the art of cookery, and given us in the New Teſtament ſome excellent receipts for making and ripening all ſorts of wines; obliged his diſciples with the diſcovery of ſome noble elixir to reſtore loſt health, and repair conſtitutions ſhattered by ſenſual indulgences: in a word, had he extended and cultivated the province of debauchery in all its parts, inſtead of haranguing the multitude upon religion and morality, then, indeed, Chriſt had made his appearance on earth to ſome purpoſe: but as matters are at preſent, I confeſs, I cannot ſee what uſe he has been of to the better

ſort

ſort of people, who ſeem to think him and his apoſtles far beneath their notice. If they thought there was any truth in his being the Son of God, his high extraction, one might conceive, would entitle him to their civilities; ſince the greateſt ſcoundrel on the earth, provided that he is come of a good family, is looked upon as a perſon of diſtinguiſhed merit, and treated accordingly with much reſpect: this I ſuppoſe may be the reaſon, and a man riſes into notice as he advances in raſcality, and is not deemed fit to be ſpoken to by any body, until he has committed crimes enough to have ſent a vulgar rogue to the antipodes.

There is a degree of cowardice in keeping holy the Sabbath-day, becauſe the fear of God is implied in it: which is a full ſufficient reaſon for men of faſhion to ſhun a church with as much indignation as they would the refuſal of a challenge. No man, ſurely, who calls himſelf a Gentleman, would by any means appear to be afraid of God, or hell; wiſely judging true courage to conſiſt in the being afraid of nothing. Choice ſpirits, who kick the world before them like a foot-ball, laugh at the idea of being damned. This is very true, it may be ſaid, as long as they are in good health, they do not think of death, or care for its conſequences: but when

when their debaucheries have caſt them upon a bed of ſickneſs, and the phyſicians are met in conſultation upon their rotten conſtitutions, they fall into a terrible fright, and get a clergyman to ſay ſome prayers for them. I was afraid of this objection, and, I muſt confeſs, I ſcarcely know what to anſwer to it. I own I have been a witneſs to inſtances of this ſort, and have known one of the fineſt dogs of the age laugh at God when he was well, and beg his pardon when he was ſick; nay, more than that, lie ſhivering and quaking on his bed, and aſk the clergyman, whether he thought he ſhould be damned or not. This was the caſe of my Lord Rocheſter, who ſhewed himſelf off, when in good health, for the choiceſt ſpirit of his time, and would have died like an hero, and gone to the devil, or elſewhere, it had been no great matter, if he had not run ſneaking after the parſon at his laſt moments. The ſame may be ſaid of a great many fine fellows, who have loſt their hearts at the hour of death, and, inſtead of dying game, have gone whining out of the world, like a litter of puppies to the horſe-pond.

There is much inconvenience in keeping holy the Sabbath-day: if the cuſtom of going to church were tolerable at any time, it would be ſo in the ſummer months, when the

the church is the cooleſt place to be found: this circumſtance might be reckoned upon as ſome amends for being pulled out of bed before one's time to attend prayers. But in winter to be called up as ſoon as the ſun riſes, to hurry away to church half dreſſed, half awake, and without one's breakfaſt, to ſuffer martyrdom by cold in the midſt of ſtone walls, and marble monuments, is ſurely more than what God ought to expect at the hands of any Gentleman or Lady in the univerſe. And I think I may ſafely ſay, that there are very few people of any note, who would not ſooner run the riſk of being damned, than ſubmit to ſuch extravagant a Commandment.

The keeping holy the Sabbath-day is vaſtly vulgar, foraſmuch as the beau monde deem the thing exceſſively ungenteel to aſk any favours of God Almighty. And, indeed, for people who have every thing they want within their reach, either to pray to God for more, or thank him for what they have got, would be very ridiculous. Moreover, folks go to church to beg God's pardon for their ſins: therefore to be continually going to church, is as much as to ſay, one is a very great ſinner. Beſides, the clergyman is kept and paid on purpoſe to take care of our ſouls: if this be the truth, what need have

we

we to trouble ourſelves at all about the matter? It is his buſineſs, not ours, to take care that no ſoul in his pariſh be damned.

Obſervations upon the Fifth Commandment.

HONOUR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER, &c.

TWO things are implied in this Commandment, with reſpect to the duties of children to their parents; that is to ſay, gratitude and reſpect. Gratitude is due to them for our introduction into the world, and for the kindneſſes which we receive, after we are landed in it. Reſpect, firſt to their age and authority, ſecondly, to their perſons and commands. I ſhall now proceed to point out the very great abſurdities of theſe duties. In the firſt place, I cannot ſee what great thanks are due from the child to its parents, for awakening him out of the peaceful ſlumbers of non-exiſtence, and thruſting him, whether he will or no, into a world full of ſcoundrels and miſery, to be kicked and cuffed, and horſe-whipped, and perhaps hang-

ed at laſt; and all for no other reaſon, but becauſe his parents choſe to follow their own inclinations. I ſay, I cannot ſee where the mighty obligation lies in this matter, and, indeed, why the child ſhould not owe the parents a ſpite, rather than good offices, for introducing him into ſo much bad company. Not to mention the cloathing him with a body at the beſt ſubject to pains, and infirmities; but, for the moſt part, loaded with a ſupercargo of the parents diſeaſes. If, indeed, there were any ſuch thing as a life after this, not only free from all pain, but a ſtate of eternal happineſs, ſomething might be reckoned upon, as a compenſation for the variety of ill turns, and knocks on the pate, which a man meets with in this world: this, indeed, would be an excellent poultice for all the thorns in the fleſh. But for a man to be pulled by the noſe, and kicked upon the backſide, daſhed about from poſt to pillar, and back again from pillar to poſt, and very often to fall in with a ſound cudgelling for nothing at all, and finally to go out of the world, like a ſtrange dog out of a kitchen, with oaths, execrations, and a red-hot poker at his head, is a ſort of frolic, in which I confeſs I cannot ſee any vaſt deal of fun, or favour; or, how it is, that a man is bound in gratitude to his father and mother, for all this

rare

rare ſport *. But to give the Commandment fair play, I will admit, that a man's life is not altogether made up of hard rubs, and broken ſhins; I will allow, that out of this comical haricot, a ſavoury bit may here and there be fiſhed by the wiſe, and the judicious—let it be ſo:—nevertheleſs the bitter is an overmatch for the ſweet; there are ſo many croſs bones in this odd fiſh, that it is ten to one a man gets choaked with them, before he has got half a belly full. And what are the ſweets of this life, after all that is ſaid of them, but very windy food at the beſt, and although they may tickle the palate a little at the moment, very generally end in a fit of the colic †? But let us fol-

* I think fit to obſerve on this place, that this is intended as a ſatire on thoſe, who are at all times very ready to ſet down to the account of their fathers and mothers, thoſe evils, which, in fact, they have nobody to thank for but themſelves: ſince, it ſhould be remembered, that every one has ſufficient reaſon given him to keep his paſſions in very good order if he will, which are the genuine cauſes of moſt of the troubles which men fall into: but thoſe calamities, which aſſault us, ariſing either from the perverſeneſs of others, or appointed by the will of God, are of ſuch value to the true Chriſtian, as, without them, he cannot ſhew how much he is ſuperiour to the reſt of mankind.

† Senſual indulgences, for the moſt part, carry ſo bitter a ſcourge along with them, that the profligate gets little elſe than an aching heart for his money. And there is a good deal of arch ſatire in the phraſe, the calling theſe ſenſualiſts, "*Men* "*of Pleaſure.*" If any doubt this, let them aſk the Phyſicians, who will tell them, that the acuteſt pains, and the moſt excruciating agonies, are the fruits of exceſs, intemperance, and debauchery. But it may be thought a little too hard, to make

low a faſhionable brat from his birth to his grave, and, by theſe means, we ſhall be the better enabled to ſee what mighty obligations he is under to his father and mother.

The very moment, almoſt, that he is landed in the world, the poor animal is rolled up in a good meaſure of fine linen, bound hand and foot, and thrown into a ſort of wicker-baſket, to bawl itſelf to ſleep. As for the mother, ſhe makes all the haſte ſhe can to recover her ſtrength and beauty, and get out again among her gallants. To return to the babe—a ſort of a milch cow is provided for its ſuſtenance; and it has very good luck if it meets with ſome freſh country wench, ſent up to London to get her own living, with a fine breaſt of milk, and a baſtard at her back, that is hurried out of the world as ſoon as it comes into it, with a fit of the gripes, by eating ſour butter-milk, deprived of its natural right to its mother's breaſts to make room for a brat of better conditions than itſelf. A fine lady, it muſt be obſerved, has

a jeſt of human miſeries; I have to ſay, that when parents have taken a great deal of trouble to inſtruct their children in Religion and Morality, and have ſhewn their offspring, with much care and good will, the road which leads through piety and virtue to happineſs in this world, and in the next, and are treated with diſobedience, ſcorn, and contumacy for their pains; no ſcourge is too ſharp for the fleſh of thoſe reprobates, who make a mockery of the ſorrows of their fathers and mothers, and uſe old age irreverently.

ſomething

ſomething elſe to do than to nurſe her own child, and thinks ſhe has had quite trouble enough with it before it was brought forth, and therefore never plagues herſelf with the vermin afterwards. As for the fine Gentleman whom the newſpapers call the father, he reads an account of his Lady's having been in the ſtraw in the Daily Advertiſer, deeming the thing to be at the beſt but an even bett whether the child be his own or another's. To proceed—our young varlet has a pair of breeches put upon his tail, and is forthwith packed off to a public ſchool. Here a new ſcene of miſery is opened upon our ſmall hero, and he is followed cloſe at the heels with a ſcourge out of one claſſic into another, until ſuch time as he is old enough to go to the Univerſity: the very moment he is out of the reach of the rod, he leaps, and jumps, and laughs, and capers, and dances, like a mad thing. He is no ſooner entered at the Univerſity, but he has the uſe of his limbs taken from him; he is forced to ſit ſtill, as if he had the gout, for many hours together, liſtening to a variety of tedious lectures; an inſult which no man of any ſpirit can bear: he leaves college as ſoon as he can:——Now gaming, drinking and riot, horſes, dogs, and harlots, would ſend him, very genteelly, to the Devil

in a twelvemonth, did not his father catch him up, and tie a great log to his heels—I mean a private Tutor—and ſend him abroad upon his travels. Lo! He returns to his native country, after having travelled like a great fiſh, that always ſtinks the worſe, the farther it is carried; and, as rivers which run through a great many towns, collect a naſty load of ſoil and filth at each, in their TOUR; our fine Gentleman convinces us, by the additional vices, and diſeaſes, which he has gathered as he ran along, that he has laid out his father's money to the very beſt advantage. Now, immediately upon the importation of our hero, and his freight of follies, his father orders him to marry without delay.—His foreign air, his fine clothes, and his impudence, introduce him, at once, as the firſt favourite among the Ladies; and all thoſe charms, and beauties, which ſome folks are apt to think ſhould be the reward of men of real worth, are diſplayed to attract our irreſiſtible fine Gentleman. One pretty Miſs makes him a purſe, another a pocket-book, another a tooth-pick-caſe, another a watch-chain, and another ſtrikes a bold ſtroke for our beau; and writes him a note with her own hand. Our grand Seignior is not much at a loſs, at which to caſt his handkerchief, and, different perhaps from other races,

races, ſhe wins this, who carries the greateſt weight of metal. A licence is immediately procured, and ſome poor girl is made ſupremely bleſſed, in being united to a maſs of putrefaction. Old age comes on at thirty, his diſeaſes thicken upon him, and draw up their complicated forces upon his ſhattered conſtitution. The Phyſicians meet, conſult, and give him up to his maladies, and his chaplain; who diſcovers as great a complication of diſorders in his ſoul, as had baffled the arts of the faculty in his body: at length comes old Death, and carries off our choice ſpirit in a terrible fright, and in diſmal expectation of everlaſting damnation. Now this is a faſhionable journey through life; reader, what thinkeſt thou of it? I think a man had better be horſe-whipt from his cradle to his grave, than run ſuch a race as I have deſcribed; and would owe more thanks to his father and mother.

It may be objected here, that people ought to take better care of their children.—OUGHT!!!—A man might as well tell me, that people *ought* to keep God's Commandments.—*Ought!* indeed: a fine word, that *ought*.—But thus much for gratitude.—Now for reſpect.—In the firſt place, a queſtion occurs here: is reſpect due from children to their parents, abſtractedly, be-

cauſe they are their parents, or rather, upon account that they carry themſelves with ſuch becoming dignity in all they do and ſay, as to ſhew themſelves really reſpectable? becauſe, if parents act the part of either fools, or profligates, it would be little elſe than a practical ſatire upon their fathers and mothers, for children to ſhew them a reſpect which folly, though covered with grey hairs, can have no title to. It would look well, I muſt confeſs, for parents to correct their children for doing the very ſame things, which, if they themſelves have left off doing, it is not becauſe they are no longer willing, but no longer able to do. But if parents make a practice of breaking as many of God's Commandments as they can, and break their children's heads for following their parents example, how ſhould the children have a reſpect for their parents, when their fathers and mothers do thoſe very things, for the doing of which the children are beaten? Let it be noted here, that I do not ſay parents do wrong in breaking God's Commandments; I would by all means in the world adviſe them ſo to do, if they lie in their way either to pleaſure, or profit; and I think hanging is a very hard thing, and a very great inconvenience to any man, merely becauſe he will have a thing one way, and the law,

will

will have it another. — Let me be underſtood to ſay, that children ſhould not be corrected for doing what their parents do; if they are, I cannot ſee what reſpect is due to people, who commend a thing by practiſing it, and, like folks out of their wits, condemn it, in rebuking their children for doing it; for, ſurely, they cannot beat a child for doing right: and, ſurely, they themſelves would not do any thing, if it were wrong. Add to this, reſpect to parents is a very great hardſhip, and a ſound box on the ear, is no other than what an old lady ought to expect, if ſhe take ſo much upon her, as to tell her daughter of her faults. — And it is quite enough, I think, if a young fellow of faſhion and ſpirit bear, with ſome ſhow of good humour, the being kept out of his eſtates, by his father, without having the additional duty of putting up with reproofs, and ill words, laid upon him. What can be a greater hardſhip upon a ſon, than to have his father lingering in this world, to the amount of ſeventy or eighty years; as if he ſtaid in the land of the living, upon no other account than to guard his money, and tie up his heir apparent from profligacy, madneſs, and riot? Can his ſon honour and revere his father for this? At the time too, when he is looking out with

ſuch

ſuch eager wiſhes for the day, which will put it into his power to turn the good old family manſion into a theatre, gaming-houſe, or a bagnio? Can he reſpect the man, who ſtands between him and his deareſt pleaſures? Can he do otherwiſe than hope ſoon to ſee his parent's bones mingled with the duſt, when his throat burns for the midnight bumper, and his heart pants for the high exceſſes of debauchery?—But enough of this Commandment.

Obſervations upon the Sixth Commandment.

THOU SHALT DO NO MURDER.

THIS is one of the ſevereſt laws that ever exiſted: and I have not the leaſt doubt, but my reader will agree with me in its being ſo, as ſoon as I produce him my reaſons upon it. If we follow the footſteps of thoſe who are gone before us, we ſhall not make any very long ſtay in this world; and time runs on ſo faſt, that the beſt part of a man's

man's life is ſpent, before he thinks at all about being rivetted into a ſtone coffin, and having two or three tuns of marble laid upon his bones. Death, indeed, is a ſort of thing, which people think very little about, as long as they live at their eaſe, and their tradeſmen will give them credit; and always put off the payment of this great debt of nature, as they do of their other debts, as long as they can. And this, as long as folks enjoy themſelves, and have a ſufficient ſtock of conſtitution to anſwer the demands of their paſſions and appetites, and plenty of money in their purſes, nobody, ſurely, can blame them for doing. But although people in general do not much like to have any thing to do with death, as long as they can poſſibly avoid it, upon the account of an odd ſort of uncertainty that ſeems to attend this going out of the world, with reſpect to what will become of them when their ſouls and bodies diſſolve partnerſhip; yet death has its uſes, and thoſe too very good ones, when a man is hunted about in the world like a duck in a mill-pool, by a pack of barking dogs that will not be ſatisfied until they have torn his eſtates all to pieces, in order to get at their own, as they politely term it, and ſhut him up in a dungeon to be haunted by the ghoſts of his departed guineas. A man begins to think

think that there is no great fun in prolonging his exiſtence when he has loſt all honour and credit in the world; when he has been led out of the gaming-houſes for a ſharper by the noſe, and has been introduced to the kennel by ſome handſome kicks upon the backſide; when he has a mark ſet upon him, like Cain, for a ſcoundrel, and has a back that attracts the horſe-whip like a magnet; when he cannot move from one place to another without being ſteered, like a ſhip, at the helm, with a ſupple-jack, or taken in tow by his ears to the horſe-pond; when all his friends ſtand aloof from him, as if he had got the plague, and wheel off their noſtrils at the ſight of him, as they do from a night-cart; when he is reduced to his laſt ſhirt and ſhilling, and all men run away from him, like rats from a falling houſe; when hunger pinches his belly and cold his back; when no man will truſt him for a penny-worth of bread—I ſay, when ſuch a quiver of calamities is exhauſted upon a miſerable ſinner, the law is unſpeakably ſevere that forbids him to put an end to his ſufferings. According to this Commandment a man cannot call his ſoul his own, ſince he is not at liberty to do what he likes with it, but is bound by its rigour to ſupport, of all others the greateſt curſe, a wretched exiſtence.

It may be ſaid, perhaps, that it is no great matter what becomes of a raſcal, and the heavier the pains and penalties that are laid upon him the better. I dare ſay there are folks in the world, who are good-natured enough to think ſo, and ſuch as may never have the luck to meet with as much rope as they deſerve, as long as they live. Let it be noted, however, that I am not ſpeaking of what others think in this caſe, but what the poor devil thinks of his ill fortune, who is buffeted about in ſuch a manner above ground, that he would fain get under it, like a hard-run fox, as ſoon as he can.

The taking of a thing for granted to be what it really is not, is called a prejudice, and is one of thoſe things which it is very hard for any one to get the better of; ſuicide, for inſtance, is deemed by ſome ſilly people to be a terrible ſin, upon the authority, it may be, of this Commandment: and they will diſpute upon it, as long as you pleaſe; for a wiſe man, like a country juſtice, had much rather have the worſt of an argument, than the good ſenſe to own it. But no man is fit to live in the world, who does not know how to manage a fool; and the beſt way to keep him quiet, is never to contradict him; and if you always let him paſs for a very wiſe perſon, he will look upon you

you to be the moſt ingenious man in the univerſe, except himſelf. Few of the fools we meet with, in the world, are abſolutely born ſuch but have neglected their minds as ſome abject ſlovens neglect their perſons; and as the latter are too idle to keep themſelves clean, the former, upon the ſame account, take no pains to make themſelves wiſe. Et rude quid proſit non video ingenium.

Young men in the reverſion of great eſtates are very hardly dealt by in this vexatious ſtatute. — They cannot give ſo much as five guineas to a cook, to pack off a troubleſome old gentleman to the regions of the bleſſed. Such of the choice ſpirits of the age, who are impatient to ſtrike ſome bold ſtrokes whilſt their blood is warm, and their days at the beſt, look upon thoſe crazy old ſouls, that go by the name of their fathers, (and, indeed, I think their reputed ſons might knock moſt of them on the head, without being guilty of parricide), as little elſe than a ſort of incumbrance upon *their* eſtates, and think that the ſooner they were out of the way the better. More eſpecially ſo, when a great many of theſe fine young dogs are ſo preſſed by their creditors on one ſide, and their harlots and baſtards on the other, that they live in a ſort of whirlwind, and cannot fix their faces to any given point for a moment,

ment, without ſeeing very good reaſon, not knowing which way to look, to tack about to another. Much are they grieved by this law, and, moreover, a vaſt many very proper young men, the more is the pity, are ſhut up in priſons, where their bodies are kept in pawn for the payment of their debts, whilſt their fathers are rolling in money and luxury, and will not ſo much as put their hands into their pockets, to let looſe ſo much miſchief upon the world. And it may be deemed the ſafeſt way to keep their ſons chained up, like maſtiffs, in order to make them the fiercer, in caſe of an invaſion. At which time, their ſpirit of rapine, plunder and murder may be well directed towards the enemies of their country, and inſtead of debauching men's wives and daughters, and ſhooting their huſbands, brothers aud fathers in duels, they may diſcharge their piſtols, perhaps, to a better purpoſe, at the common foe. Leſt I may be thought to decorate theſe fine geniuſes with praiſes undeſerved, in the attributing to their virtues the ſpirit of rapine and plunder, it ought not to be forgotten that men of very good faſhion make a practice of going upon the highway.

Obſer-

Obſervations upon the Seventh Commandment.

THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

IF the law had ſtood written thus, "Thou "ſhalt not eat," it might have been kept, perhaps, by ſuch as had loſt their appetites. But, jeſting apart, how can it be ſaid, "Thou ſhalt not commit adultery," when every body knows that adultery is the final cauſe of marriage? It ſtands in one edition, "Thou ſhalt commit adultery," which is aſſuredly the genuine reading. I ſhall be laughed at for ſuppoſing that the fine Ladies have any ſuch thing as a prayer-book in their libraries; but if they ſhould have, I make no doubt, from their practice, but that the Commandment ſtands written in their edition without any negative in it at all. Otherwiſe, who would marry the bed-ridden, the cripple, the deformed, the diſeaſed, the unnatural, the impotent and the aged, for titles, diſtinction, ſplendour, and large ſettlements, if the Ladies might not commit adultery as often as they thought fit? There are ſo many objections which offer themſelves againſt this Commandment, that I am really at a loſs, which to lay before

fore the reader firſt: I have ſaid, that adultery is the final cauſe of marriage, the end of the inſtitution; by what means the monoſyllable NOT could have crept into this Commandment, I cannot conceive; for how can it be poſſible that adultery ſhould be forbidden, when every wife couple marry for the ſake of money? That is, in order the woman may be made the beſt market of. Man and wife in this buſineſs act the part of ſkilful bird-catchers; the man is the decoy, the woman the net; the rich young fool the game. The conſequences are evident; they take care the proofs ſhall be good, make a fuſs and a ſhow about ſeparation and divorce, *and enjoy themſelves in private over the booty*. A court of juſtice is not always a neceſſary engine in theſe matters, unleſs the young cully grows obſtinate, and will not pay the damages in demand; in ſuch caſes he muſt be put into the preſs of the law, and the money muſt be ſqueezed out of him. Adultery is certainly one of the moſt lucrative trades among us, and, were it to be put down by law, a great many very fine folks muſt put down their town houſes and their gay carriages, ſell their plate and jewels, and be glad to live in ſnug cottages upon the gooſe-commons in the country. The rage for gaming among the ladies proceeds upon

this principle; a rich young fellow, who has much to loſe, very ſeldom gets any money, if he happens to be on the winning ſide; for, in proportion as a lady gets deep in debt, ſhe grows fond of the winner, and a few hints ſoon tell a coxcomb what is the matter; which, indeed, any man who was not very vain of his own ſweet perſon and graces would never conſtrue in his own favour. — But modeſty forbids me to follow our female gameſter any further:—Suffice it to ſay, that the young gallant finds very prompt payment; and the lady, if ſhe has any beauty, has not the leaſt occaſion to draw upon her huſband's or her father's banker to pay her debts of HONOUR. Hence the frequency of thoſe advertiſements in the news-papers, ſo full of humanity to ſuch of the ſex who may ſtand in need of a *temporary retirement*. Theſe are the refined pleaſures of thoſe who move in an exalted ſphere, and ſhine the ſtars of the firſt magnitude in the firmament of faſhion. But I cannot do them juſtice in proſe, and ſhall therefore leave their praiſes to be ſet in the jewels and the pearls of eloquence, by the Poets and the fine Gentlemen. The example which they exhibit to the reſt of the world, is what I muſt take all the pains in my power to recommend to the imitation of all ſuch, who are religiouſly and devoutly

devoutly diſpoſed, by every argument. No woman can poſſibly ſet herſelf off to the beſt advantage, unleſs ſhe lays all modeſty aſide, and reſerves nothing but the pretence of it: no man, unleſs he does the ſame by his honour. The chief thing in which fine breeding and manners conſiſt, is the paſſing off the counterfeit with a good air, and defending the deceit at the riſk of life itſelf: a man of the niceſt honour may tell a lie, a dozen if it ſuits his purpoſe; if he cannot gain a beautiful woman any other way for inſtance, there is no diſhonour in telling a lie; the diſhonour conſiſts in the putting up with being told that one has done ſo. Thus a fine Lady may make a dozen trips without injuring her virtue; for, in the firſt place, ſhe cannot hurt what ſhe has not, and, if need be, ſhe may defend her pretence to it, by an action at law. But if a man really poſſeſſes honour, or a woman modeſty, it is high time they were in Heaven; for I am ſure, they are not fit to live in ſuch a world as this is. However difficult a thing it may be for virtuous women, and men of integrity, to live in a world full of raſcals and proſtitutes, ſome there are, I find, who have courage ſo to do, and thoſe too united by ſo true affection to each other, that they ſeem to me to be a great deal more happy within the ſmall

circles of their little families, than are they who have all the pleaſures and luxuries at their command. How they contrive this, is beſt known to themſelves; but I know that they take a very different courſe from the ſplendid rabble of faſhion, and, as man and wife, would chooſe rather to die than be untrue to each other. I ſhall mention the few things which I have taken notice of concerning theſe odd folks, and leave my reader to form what opinions he pleaſes upon them. Theſe men and women I have noted with ſome curioſity are always very plain and neat in their dreſs, and obſerve the ſame moderation in every thing elſe; in defiance of all ridicule, they make a practice of ſaying their prayers, and of going to church on a Sunday with their families: the men, inſtead of getting drunk, and the women, inſtead of entertaining routs and card-parties on Sunday nights, employ their time in inſtructing themſelves and their families in Religion and Virtue. The women ſtay a great deal at home, and are not too high to look into domeſtic matters; the men are very much employed in taking care of, and improving their eſtates, and regulating their expences to ſuch a meaſure, as to be enabled to pay to every man his due, out of the fruits of them. Some of theſe women are extremely

extremely beautiful, and have a way of keeping their fine complexions a great while longer than thoſe Ladies who lay out ſo much money in waſhes, paint and poultices; and the only coſmeticks they uſe, are temperance and exerciſe: and what is very extraordinary, although they are ſo handſome, they are not at all proud of being ſeen; and if any man offers to flatter their beauties, they either laugh at him for a fool, or are very much diſpleaſed with him for offering ſuch an inſult to their good ſenſe as to praiſe them to their faces. Not even finery itſelf, which other women had much rather die than be without, has any effect upon them: if they have any money to ſpare, after having purchaſed themſelves ſuch plain ſuits of clothes as they uſually put on, a ſtrange cuſtom! they lay it out in charities: and, reader, wilt thou believe me when I tell thee, that when theſe women marry, they marry becauſe they are in love!—and fix their affections upon ſuch men as one would naturally think, of all others, the leaſt likely to become favourites of the ladies; odd ſtupid creatures, who go to church, ſay their prayers, and keep God's Commandments.

Obſervations upon the Eighth Commandment.

THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.

LET no man be honeſt, unleſs he is ſure that he ſhall be very well paid for it. Honeſty is very bad policy, and is only called the beſt, by men of ſenſe, when it is moſt profitable. I will ſay, and with great confidence, that they who are ſo exceſſively fine-mouthed, as to feel a diſreliſh to every thing, which is not ſtrictly juſt and honeſt, are not very likely to grow fat, and to proſper in the world; whatever they may think of it. Your honeſt men generally look vaſtly meager, and appear to be ſhockingly out of condition, which gives me good reaſon to conclude, that honeſty keeps but a very indifferent table. If ragged coats, and empty bellies, are the only things which honeſty can comfort a man with, I muſt needs ſay, that it is high time that honeſty were kicked out of ſociety. I ſhall give very good advice, I think, when I recommend it to every one to conſider, what it is that makes moſt for his own intereſt, before any thing elſe; and if money may be put into a man's pocket, I adviſe him never

to

to think ill of the means, as long as the end is good. If a man has any commercial dealings with another, he will do well to overreach him in any bargain he poſſibly can: thus he gets a double victory over him, the one in wit, the other in profit. To get as much as he can, is a duty which every one owes to himſelf and family: and he never ought to ſtick at any lie, which is likely to make him a richer man. It may be ſaid, that, if he be diſcovered in any cheat, no man will have any dealings with him, in future; it is an abſurdity to think ſo; for if one oath will not do, a dozen will: he has nothing to do but to ſwear that he has ſeen the error of his ways; that he has been, to be ſure, a ſad rogue; but that times are altered, he is now grown older, and finds that it is beſt to be honeſt. To think that there be any uſe in real honeſty, is a very dangerous miſtake; the utility conſiſts in the making a pretence of it. Now this is the very point, of all others, in which people err ſo groſsly with reſpect to every rule in Religion and Morality: the art lies in this, in the paſſing themſelves upon the world for moral and religious characters, in order that they may cheat one another with the greater ſecurity. But to return to the Commandment; the Spartans, a very ingenious people, acted very wiſely in not puniſhing

niſhing any one for ſtealing, but for the ſtealing in ſo clumſy a manner as to be detected in the theft. Cornelius Agrippa, the Magician, in his book de Vanitate Scientiarum, remarks, that Theodorus the Philoſopher, who was honoured with the title of a Deity, was of opinion, that the truly wiſe man would not heſitate to commit adultery, ſacrilege, or theft, when occaſion ſuited: for there is not any of theſe things which are in their natures evil, but only in the opinions of the vulgar, and a wiſe man might pick a pocket without hurting his credit. Theodorus, it muſt be confeſſed, was a very good moral Philoſopher, and ſaw things in a better light than many others, who were called by that name; and I cannot but think that his principles are likely to be of infinite uſe to all civilized ſocieties. But we have got a trick here in England, of hanging all we can catch of this ſect of philoſophers; and I have good reaſons for thinking, if Theodorus himſelf, the founder of the ſect, were in exiſtence amongſt us, and ſhould undertake to practiſe his experimental philoſophy in Great Britain, that, unleſs he were a very acute logician, he would find an *hempen halter* would be rather too hard for him in argument.

But however, I would not have ſcoundrels diſcomfited;

diſcomfited; and if any have the luck to be pulled neck and heels into a court of juſtice, not to be caſt down upon it; and if a rope ſhould happen to get the better of their throats in the diſpute, let me adviſe them not to diſgrace the Devil's clock by making bad pendulums.

If the committing one crime brings a man into danger, he will do right not to leave off, becauſe if one fault brings him into hazard, another will ſave his neck; therefore I would adviſe him to go on until he has made his ground good again.

An honeſt man is no better than a fool upon many accounts; the odds are always againſt him: an active, ingenious rogue will pick all the teeth out of his head, and his money out of his pocket, whilſt he ſtands conſidering what is fitting to be done. The honeſty of other men is the beſt defence that a villain has; in them the weakeſt part, ſince a man who is honeſt himſelf is more apt to think others ſo than a raſcal, who takes it for granted that every one will be rogue if he can, and therefore keeps a ſharper look out, and is leſs plundered. An honeſt man is the beſt defence a rogue has; becauſe, until he has been proved to be a knave, he will defend him the longeſt; and the laws themſelves always lean towards mercy.

Obſer-

Obſervations upon the Ninth Commandment.

THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST THY NEIGHBOUR.

WHEN we conſider that merit of any ſort is a very deteſtable thing, whether it conſiſts in the excellencies of virtue, great ſcholarſhip, the right uſe of genius or the like, calumny and detraction, which beat it down, and help to ſuffocate it whenever they meet with it, ſhould by no means be forbidden by any law: foraſmuch as the chief weapons are thus wreſted out of the hands of the ſcoundrel, which give the deepeſt wounds to the beauties of the moſt accompliſhed characters. Men of ſuperiour talents and worth would get a great deal too high above other people's heads, if there were no raſcals to depreciate, and bear falſe witneſs againſt them; and when the account of ſome eminent perſon comes to hand well qualified and daſhed with frequent ſtrokes of malevolence, folks are not apt to feel ſo much uneaſineſs when his name is mentioned, but are vaſtly relieved at the thoughts of his many imperfections. But, let us conſider calumny in another point of view; as it

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is the coward's only means of revenge, and of all others the ſafeſt, becauſe the perſon againſt whom the daſtard ſhews his malice, is out of the way when the blow is given. He bears falſe witneſs againſt his neighbour in ſecurity, without any fear of the horſe-whip or the pillory; for there is not one in a thouſand, although a man may have a thouſand friends, who will be at the hazard of telling him the name of the villain, who has ſhot at him in the dark. There are a great many generous people in the world, who will do a vaſt number of kind things in which there is no danger; but will not riſk ſo much as the loſs of a penny for the ſalvation of one half of the univerſe. And nobody can blame them for that; for what man, in his right ſenſes, would not ſooner let his neighbour's houſe burn to the earth in ſilence, than call him out of his bed to ſtop the flames, if he thought he ſhould loſe a farthing by telling him that his premiſes were all in a blaze? All the advantages of detraction are not readily to be counted out; the ſpirit of calumny, like the ſtink of putrefaction, ſtrikes upon the ſenſe whether you will or no, and brings many an inſignificant coxcomb into notice, that we ſhould otherwiſe have paſſed by, like a dead carcaſe in a ditch, without obſervation, did not the noiſe

noiſe of the one, and the ſtench of the other, bring us acquainted with both. Cowards, I ſay, have no other way of executing their vengeance upon any one who has given them offence, than by detraction; and every word that comes out of their mouths is as venomous as a chewed bullet, the wound of which is ſaid to be almoſt incurable.

But, further, this Commandment may be ſaid to extend to lies told, with the ceremony of kiſſing a Bible, in the courts of juſtice, to which the law gives the complex term, perjury.—If by virtue of this Commandment perjury is no longer to be practiſed either within or without the courts, I am troubled to think how many honeſt men will loſe their bread. And it would be a very great hardſhip upon them to deny them the uſes of perjury, when they have the fortitude to run ſuch riſks to get their living, that they ſeldom put a ſhilling into their pockets, without deſerving to have their ears ſpiked to the pillory.

Obſervations upon the Tenth Commandment.

THOU SHALT NOT COVET THY NEIGHBOUR'S HOUSE, NOR HIS WIFE, &c.

THE Legiſlator, one would think, might have been contented with a man's not ſtealing his neighbour's goods, committing adultery with his wife, or running away with his daughter; but to protract the law to ſuch an extravagant meaſure, as to make it even a ſin to covet any thing that is his, certainly is little elſe than making a ſin of a good appetite. If it were poſſible to behold a man rolling in a gilded chariot, incruſted in pearls and embroidery, abounding in riches, and rioting in luxuries, getting drunk with Burgundy every day, and tumbling about upon coſtly Ægyptian carpets, ſurrounded with a banditti of powdered ſervants well paid for their trouble of eating and drinking, and all other hard labour, bleſſed with as many Concubines as King Solomon in all his glory, living ſo much at his eaſe as to have gentlemen to dreſs him and to undreſs him, to wipe his noſe and put him into his bed, indulging his body as the ſeaſons ſuit with hot and cold baths, pickling his limbs in perfumes

perfumes and ſweet unguents, as if he were afraid that the crows ſhould miſtake him for carrion; add to this, his fine houſe in town and his fine houſe in the country, his parks full of fat veniſon, his cellars of the richeſt wines, his tables loaded with every thing of the beſt, his apartments full of muſick, ſweet eſſences and magnificent furniture—if it were poſſible, I ſay, to behold all theſe fine ſights, and not covet any thing that is his, the Commandment might ſit eaſier upon the ſhoulders of mankind: but, as matters are, I believe it to be thought a very heavy yoke by moſt people, who could find it in their hearts to take ſuch a man as I have juſt deſcribed, by the throat, and ſqueeze his ſoul out of his body to get poſſeſſion of thoſe things which are his, if they did not pay very good reſpect to the gallows. To ſuch as theſe the above Commandment muſt needs be a more intolerable nuiſance, than any that was ever removed by a writ of ad quod damnum.

Thus, reader, I have briefly touched upon every one of the Commandments in their turns, and have given very good reaſons why they ſhould every one of them be aboliſhed: and I dare ſay that you, Sir, and every other perſon of good ſenſe will agree with me in thinking, that the world would

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feel itſelf much more at its eaſe, and at its liberty, without them. But leſt I ſhould be miſunderſtood by a very auguſt body of men, for whoſe approbation I hunger and thirſt, I mean the Free-thinkers, I think fit to ſay, for fear they ſhould conceive themſelves and their principles bitterly derided, in my thus ſeeming to make a jeſt of God's laws, in order that they ſhould pay for it, that it is a fool's part to fall into ſuſpicions when there is no occaſion: and in order that the Profligates of this age may put their truſt in me for their champion, I further add, that it is my intention ſoon to write a ſerious eſſay upon the excellencies and truth of the Chriſtian Religion. But if I am in danger of being ſuſpected of the *acetum in pectore* by the Profligates and Free-thinkers, to ſuch a degree as to put them in doubt, whether it be quite ſafe for them to laugh with me at Religion and Morality, I may on the other hand be deemed a defender of the faith, and of the divine canons, by ſome deep-diſcerning men, who, ες κυνος πυγην βλεψαντες και τριων Αλωπεκων, have better eyes in their heads than not to ſee when they have got a jeſt on their own ſide of the queſtion. Ουτοι μεν οἱ χρησοι πολλα φαινονται τες συμμαχες κακα πεποιηκοτες· ἡμεις δ' οἱ φαυλοι, αγαθων αυτοις αιτιοι καταςαντες.

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AN obſervation occurs in p. 9. l. 3. which may be deemed, by ſome people, a piece of unqualified ſatire; than which, ſurely, nothing can be more unjuſt or malevolent. I would have it noted, therefore, that if it be thought ſuch, it is not intended by the writer ſo to be; ſince a man who never has been taught any thing may not be to blame for not knowing it: but he that has been taught any thing, and, after having careleſsly loſt it, ſtill pretends to know it, is the perſon aimed at in the obſervation.

THE END.

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